

**Illinois
Environmental Protection Agency**

US EPA RECORDS CENTER REGION 5



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IEPA Orders Bankrupt Smelter Site Sealed

Chemetco Inc. subject to \$3.86 million fine

The Chemetco Inc. operation at Hartford, a secondary copper smelter with a long history of environmental violations, on Oct. 31, 2001, notified its 150 employees that it would cease operations the following day. Soon afterward, the firm filed for bankruptcy.

When Illinois EPA became aware of the plant closing, inspectors went to the facility to assess conditions and identify potential environmental impacts. Inspectors found several areas of concern.

Closure has not been completed at any of eight hazardous waste management units subject to closure under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. A huge slag pile of more than 100,000 tons tested hazardous for lead. Other uncontained materials throughout the facility contain hazardous levels of lead and cadmium. Trace levels of heavy metals have been found in the stormwater retention pond at the site and there is concern that rainfall could cause this pond to overflow into nearby fields and wooded areas. During its years of operation, Chemetco generated sludges, baghouse dust, refractory brick, acids and other waste materials.

Based on the inspection results, IEPA Director Renee Cipriano ordered the facility sealed, restricting public access to parts of the site, and prohibiting entry by anyone except specified personnel in the performance of their duties. Those entering the site are required to comply with applicable OSHA regulations due to the hazardous materials that remain.

Environmental problems surfaced in 1996

In September 1996, an Illinois EPA inspector responding to a citizen complaint discovered the firm was discharging zinc oxide into a wetland that flows into nearby Long Lake.

Contaminated storm water was apparently discharged for approximately 10 years.

The discovery led to a criminal investigation by the State Police, the FBI and others, and prosecution by the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Four Chemetco employees, including the plant manager, pleaded guilty to charges of violating the Clean Water Act and making false statements to government agencies. The company was fined \$3.86 million and put on five years probation.



After discovery of the release, Chemetco impounded the visible zinc oxide, and attempted to remediate the waste. After lengthy technical negotiations, the Illinois EPA approved the last of several closure proposals submitted by Chemetco. In October 2000, Chemetco received a Remedial Action Plan Permit to treat the waste, and treatment began in December 2000. The treatment did not work and in January 2001, Chemetco began shipping the waste to a hazardous waste landfill. Between January and July 2001, about 5,800 tons of hazardous soils went to a permitted hazardous waste landfill and several hundred tons of non-hazardous soil were sent to local landfills. Chemetco maintained the remaining impoundments met regulatory standards but confirmation sampling information was never submitted to the IEPA.

Long Lake sediments remain an issue

The sediments in Long Lake remain an ongoing environmental issue. In May 1998, U.S.EPA found extremely high levels of lead and cadmium in the lake sediment. In June 2000, Chemetco sampled Long Lake sediments and found hazardous levels of cadmium up to 900 feet downstream of the impoundment. Though Chemetco claimed these levels were from a source other than their discharge, they provided no information identifying this "other source."

U.S.EPA and the state have filed civil complaints in federal court, asking that Chemetco conduct a risk assessment of the property, allow IEPA toxicologists to evaluate the results and establish a cleanup objective, and that Chemetco clean up Long Lake. Chemetco was unwilling to agree to this.

In response to the closing of the plant and subsequent bankruptcy, in addition to the Seal Order, the Illinois EPA has referred the site to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for a removal assessment under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, also known as CERCLA or Superfund. The U.S.EPA is in the process of determining if an

immediate or substantial threat to human health or the environment exists. If it does, they will proceed with removal.

U.S.EPA and IEPA will be conducting a more comprehensive investigation to determine whether nearby groundwater, surface soils or the surrounding environment has been impacted. This investigation is scheduled for spring 2002; the results will determine if the site is eligible for the National Priorities List, or Superfund. The Illinois EPA continues to monitor ongoing areas of environmental concern, including the holding ponds, slag pile and inadequately labeled drums stored on site.

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Friday, March 26, 1999 *Bellefonte News-Democrat*ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH **METRO** FRIDAY, MARCH 26, 1999

Man who had role in water pollution case pleads guilty

BY CHARLES BOSWORTH JR.
Of the Post-Dispatch

A man who secretly installed a pipe to dump pollution from Chemetco Inc. in Hartford into a tributary of the Mississippi River pleaded guilty to a federal charge of conspiracy Thursday.

Ira Sidney Campbell, 56, of Brighton, Ill., could get five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine when he is sentenced Aug. 20 in federal court in East St. Louis, according to U.S. Attorney W. Charles Grace.

The charge said Campbell conspired with Chemetco and others to violate the federal Clean Water Act, but there was no word on whether the company or others would be charged.

Grace said Campbell was the superintendent of maintenance for Chemetco, a copper-smelting company, when he installed the pipe in September 1986 to dump pollutants including zinc, lead and cadmium. For 10 years, the pipe poured the material into Long Lake, which drains into the river.

Grace said Campbell used workers from his own company, Industrial Fabrication and Repair Inc., to do the work. According to the charge, Chemetco continued to dump pollution through the pipe even after Campbell left the company in 1988.

The pipe was discovered in September 1996 by inspectors from the Illinois and U.S. Environmental Protection agencies.

The investigation was conducted by the Environmental Task Force for the Southern District of Illinois, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. EPA and the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Former worker pleads guilty

Plant discharged pollutants

By Cheryl Cadue

Bellefonte News-Democrat

A former Chemetco Inc. employee pleaded guilty in federal court in East St. Louis on Thursday to conspiring with his ex-employer, a Hartford smelter, to dump pollutants into Long Lake over a 10-year span.

Ira Sidney Campbell, 56, of Brighton, pleaded guilty to the charge of violating the Clean Water Act while he was still working as a maintenance superintendent with Chemetco, a secondary copper smelter.

A state and federal investigation found that Chemetco used a secret pipe installed in late 1986 by Campbell's own shop business, Industrial Fabrication and Repair Inc., to dump pollutants into Long Lake, a tributary of the Mississippi River, from September 1986 to September 1996.

The smelter continued to dis-

charge the pollutants including zinc, lead and cadmium into the tributary of the Mississippi River even after Campbell left the smelter in 1988.

The secret pipe was discovered by inspectors from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Sept. 18, 1996.

Campbell's sentencing is set for Aug. 20. He could not be reached for comment.

If convicted, he faces a maximum sentence of five years in prison, a \$250,000 fine and three years of supervised release.

Officials for Chemetco could not be reached for comment.

Agencies involved in investigating the case were the FBI, Illinois State Police, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Transportation and the Environmental Task Force for the Southern District of Illinois.

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